

The President's Daily Brief

September 7, 1976

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LEBANON: PLO leader
Yasir Arafat sent three
of his closest aides to
Damascus over the week-
end to convey his views
on Lebanon to the Syr-
ians.

Arafat reportedly is willing to
accept Syria's continued military
presence in Lebanon and its formula
for an overall settlement in that
troubled country. Fatah militants
headed by Salah Khalaf still have
not approved these new proposals.

The Syrians, who almost certainly
are aware of the deep split in
Fatah ranks, may not take Arafat's
latest entreaties seriously. Syr-
ian President Asad--who has an
abiding personal distrust of Ara-
fat--may believe that it is in
Syria's interest to encourage the
divisions among Arafat and his
colleagues and that by shunning
the PLO leader's initiatives he
can further chip away at Arafat's
credibility as Palestinian leader.

We have seen no evi-
dence to confirm press
accounts of a major
escalation of the fight-
ing in Lebanon last
weekend.

Limited clashes continued yester-
day at various points, but there
was no activity that would suggest
that any of the combatants has
launched a major new offensive.
The Christians have made no new
gains on the ground and seem only
to have intensified their artil-
lery fire in the Mount Lebanon
area.

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LIBYA-EGYPT: There
have been no signifi-
cant military develop-
ments detected along
Egypt's border with
Libya for the past
several days.

Egyptian naval units on alert at
Sollum and Matruh since August 31
reduced their readiness posture
late last week. Libyan forces in
the border area lowered their

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alert status over the weekend.
The alerts in both countries apparently were precautionary measures aimed at maintaining security during the Libyan national holiday period.

Egyptian officials continue to withhold public comment on Libyan President Qadhafi's relatively conciliatory speech last week, but the head of the Egyptian Relations Office in Tripoli privately characterized the speech as a clever move.

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The Egyptian official said that Qadhafi's speech has left Egypt in a position of being "damned if it does and damned if it does not" attack Libya.

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Qadhafi seems to believe that the "reasonable" approach is his best course at this point and has offered to meet with Egyptian President Sadat without mediators in a neutral country to resolve their differences.

In an apparent effort to make Sadat uncomfortable and to suggest that Sadat has had little control over events, Qadhafi blamed Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi and Egyptian and US intelligence for fomenting tensions between the two countries.

In an interview published over the weekend, Qadhafi repeated a promise that in the interest of Arab unity he would not use Libyan forces even to repel an Egyptian attack.

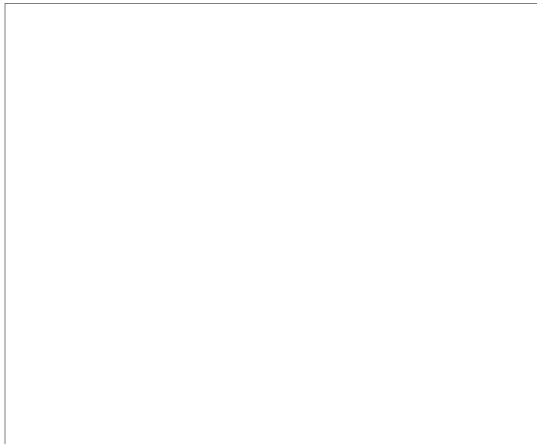
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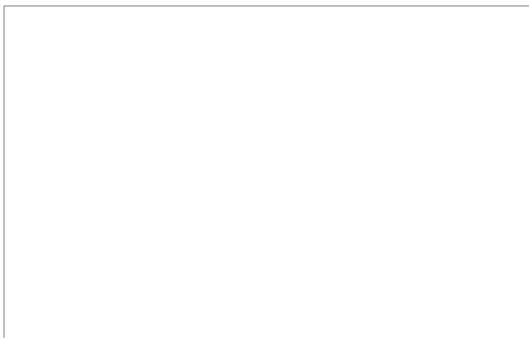
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SOUTHERN AFRICA: *The summit meeting in Dar es Salaam of five southern African presidents and leaders of Rhodesian nationalist groups apparently is exploring ways to enhance the military strength of the nationalists.*



The presence of Angolan President Neto and Sam Nujoma, leader of the South-West Africa People's Organization, clearly indicates that the situation in Namibia is also being addressed.



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NOTES

The Soviet press has criticized sharply Secretary Kissinger's talks with South African Prime Minister Vorster as a futile attempt aimed at preserving colonial rule on the continent.

The Soviets say that Secretary Kissinger is trying to persuade Vorster to offer "dubious half measures" and "minor concessions" to black leaders in an effort to create the "semblance of a solution." US economic and strategic interests dictate Washington's support for the "Pretoria racists," according to the Soviets.

Moscow clearly is warning black African leaders to be wary and to adopt a tough position. The Soviets have been concerned about the possible success of Secretary Kissinger's efforts since his meeting with Vorster was announced.

* * *

The Soviets have demanded that Japan return the MIG-25 aircraft that landed in Japan yesterday and its pilot.

The Japanese have sent a technical team of experts to examine the aircraft, the fastest and most advanced interceptor in the Soviet inventory, which has never been observed outside the USSR. Tokyo probably will allow US authorities to examine the aircraft. We do not know whether the Japanese have decided to return the aircraft to the Soviets. The pilot has asked for and will receive asylum in the US.

The Soviets flew several intelligence collection missions over the Sea of Japan yesterday, but we cannot determine if these flights were related to the defection because the Soviets periodically fly such missions over the area.

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